

# Shrewsbury School Journal

serving a community of continuous learners



Special District Report  
Card inside

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## Superintendent's Corner

BY DR. ANTHONY BENT  
SUPERINTENDENT

### The Shrewsbury Public Schools: How good should they be?

The current crisis in the fiscal health of the State of Massachusetts has broad implications in the area of public policy. Some very important questions surface that, in more prosperous times, need not be asked. How do cities and towns make ends meet with a decline in revenue from the State? How do communities balance the need for services and programs among all of the town's departments? Where do schools fit in the overall priority structure for a community? In essence, how good should our schools be?

**School Committee action to date has trimmed the budget request for FY03 by \$1,000,000.**

We know that high achievement for students means providing high-quality teachers, up-to-date books and materials, smaller class sizes, and facilities that support, not hinder, the programs of the schools. To date, Shrewsbury has done well in maintaining high levels of student success while spending considerably less per pupil than the State average. In a recent study (Chen and Ferguson, 2002), Shrewsbury was placed 19th among 226 school districts in terms of "value-added" to its predicted MCAS scores. The authors' research indicated that Shrewsbury schools outperform their funding and demographics.

Dr. Irwin Blumer, a professor of education at Boston College, reminded superintendents in a recent letter, "It seems that every time we make some progress in providing all children with the kind of education they deserve, the bottom falls out and we need once again to eliminate programs and reduce staff." It appears that many communities, including Shrewsbury will have to do just that, beginning with the next school year. The schools will need an increase over the current budget of 4.5% just to provide negotiated salary increases for staff and deal with increases in the costs of

*Superintendent's Corner, see page 2*

inside:

#### The Middle School Years

Moon retires 2

Floral's grade 5 move 3

Parker Road Preschool 4

Student reflections 4, 5

## Tracing a path through Shrewsbury



SHREWSBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PHOTO

*The fork in the road on Maple and Main was once lined with many maple trees. The house to the left still exists on its original site.*

## FY03 budget faces significant cuts

PATRICK COLLINS  
BUSINESS MANAGER

The FY03 budget continues to be in a state of turmoil and uncertainty. At the State level, drastic drop-offs in revenue and significant new expenses are projected for FY03. This has caused legislators to look for cutbacks in all areas of spending for next year, including education. State education aid, better known as Chapter 70 aid, amounts to 25% of the School Department operating budget with the

remainder coming from local tax levy. As of this writing the House Ways and Means Committee has recommended a 10% cut in education aid. This means Shrewsbury would lose \$779,576 in funding for next fiscal year. This is an extraordinary reduction especially in a district as ours that will grow by 253 new students next year. (See table below for Chapter 70 aid funding history.)

This reduction in state aid has significant implica-

*FY03 Budget, see page 2*

### Chapter 70 State Education Aid

Fiscal Year	Chapter 70 State Aid	Net Increase	Percentage Increase
FY96	\$3,365,241	\$356,395	10.59%
FY97	\$3,848,124	\$482,883	12.54%
FY98	\$4,349,972	\$501,848	11.53%
FY99	\$4,995,754	\$645,782	12.92%
FY00	\$5,616,512	\$620,758	12.43%
FY01	\$6,394,912	\$778,400	13.86%
FY02	\$7,803,859	\$1,408,947	22.03%
*FY03	\$7,024,283	(\$779,576)	(9.99%)

*\*FY03 amount is based on House Ways & Means budget plan dated 25 April 2002.*

Shrewsbury School Department  
100 Maple Avenue  
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts 01545

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